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LETTER DATED 5 JUNE 1992 FROM THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of a statement by the Department of State's Press Spokesman on the looting of relief supplies in Somalia, issued in Washington on 5 June 1992 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Edward J. PERKINS

Annex

SOMALIA: LOOTING OF RELIEF SUPPLIES

On 31 May, armed men at Mogadishu airport looted aircraft of one metric ton of medical supplies and six metric tons of fortified infant formula. Thousands of babies and small children in Somalia have starved or suffered irreparable injury from malnutrition. The health and lives of many more are threatened by this criminal behaviour. Once again, the United States Government's concern over the humanitarian tragedy in Somalia is compounded by outrage at the conduct of armed factions in that country.

The international community is coping with simultaneous disasters in the Horn of Africa, Southern Africa, Yugoslavia and elsewhere. If Somalis do not stop looting, robbing and killing the people who come to their help, the help will go elsewhere. Twenty per cent of the world-wide effort of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is in Somalia. If ICRC were forced to withdraw, there would be no one to assume its unique role.

It is imperative that Somali factional leaders exercise strict control of their supporters and put an end to the victimization of United Nations relief agencies, the ICRC, and private voluntary organizations. Those responsible for security at Mogadishu airport must return the stolen supplies to the donors for distribution to the needy. This message is being communicated to them through every available channel.